

November 23, 1998

The Honorable James B. Hunt  
Governor  
State of North Carolina  
Raleigh, NC 27603-8001

Dear Governor Hunt,

Thank you very much for your letter dated October 16th, which proposed a new initiative that would link our nation's world class universities and research companies more closely to the Federal government's world class national laboratories using the extraordinary powers of new communication technologies.

Your vision of scientists throughout the country using these tools to collaborate and operate equipment as if they were in the same research facility is not only possible, but essential to sustain U.S. scientific leadership in medicine, information technology, robotics and many other disciplines. I am excited about the prospects for this initiative, which I believe could greatly strengthen the U.S. innovation system that has contributed so much to our nation's economic growth. Your proposal would build upon a number of information technology initiatives that this Administration has strongly promoted, including our new Next Generation of Internet (NGI) initiative. Your proposal could serve as an important test bed for many of the ideas generated by these programs.

Therefore, I would propose the following next steps.

First, I will request that the appropriate Federal agencies host a series of workshops beginning in February 1999 that explore the ideas you have proposed. I believe the agencies, working with the private sector and states like North Carolina, should create a technology roadmap that defines how emerging information technologies could be used to link the Federal government's national laboratories to

the other portions of the U.S. innovation system. This roadmap process should take three to six months and could result in recommendations for a possible FY2001 interagency initiative. The roadmap would tap into the ideas and expertise of Federal, state and private sector experts and would provide the basis for long-term planning for this initiative.

Second, I see no reason to wait for a complete roadmap before starting work on some parts of your concept. I have asked the Federal agencies involved in NGI to explore pilot demonstrations of this concept in FY99 and FY2000. Given the State of North Carolina's strong interest and capabilities in this area, I would suggest that your State take the lead in working with the Federal agencies, but I'd suggest that we make this a multi-state experiment in the South East and ask for participation by other Southern states, for example Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Alabama. I would hope that we could announce the creation of this pilot effort by the Spring of 1999.

Third, I have asked Dr. Neal Lane, the President's Science Advisor, to manage this effort through the National Coordination Office for Computing, Information, and Communications, which has responsibility for coordinating the NGI Initiative. Dr. Lane and his staff will serve as your point of contact, but I will closely follow the progress being made on this important new initiative. Your office will be contacted soon by Dr. Lane's staff to begin working on this initiative.

Fourth, I am asking the U.S. Innovation Partnership (USIP), through the Office of Science and Technology Policy, to serve as a resource to this initiative. USIP promotes partnerships among state and federal governments, universities, and industry that maximize the nation's investment in research and development. This initiative will serve as an example of the power and effectiveness of state-federal partnerships in strengthening the national innovation system.

Let me conclude by again thanking you for proposing this exciting new initiative. My belief is that we are on the verge of creating an R&D infrastructure that will result in a new era of scientific collaboration that transcends geographic, scientific discipline, and organizational boundaries. The time is ripe for the creation of "virtual laboratories" and I look forward to working with you on this important new endeavor.

Sincerely,

Al Gore

cc: Dr. Neal Lane, OSTP